756 "As in all the tribes of this America, there are among our Mataguayos certain doctors or wizards, whom they call "yegu." They are feared and respected. Those who wish to enter this profession go off into the uninhabited areas for a few days, fast rigorously and run about continuously day and night. Their manner of effecting a cure is to lean their whole bodies right over the sick person, who is lying on the ground, place both hands in the form of a tube over the affected and painful parts and then blow with all their might emitting at the same time a series of hoarse bellows. They persevere in this treatment for hours on end and even all night long. By way of payment they are given anything they ask for to the point that the invalid may be left naked, but if the sick person should not recover, his relatives will insist that everything be returned. When an epidemic of some sort appears in the village or in the surrounding villages, all the yegus come together, sit down a short distance away from the group of huts and with their faces turned toward them burst forth into a melancholy song accompanied by the sound of some small gourds filled with stones which they shake at the same time. They think that this will frighten the pestilence away or prevent its entering."

164 "A common malady among the Mataguayos is mange, and the disease which ravages them most is pleurisy. As soon as they become ill they shave their heads and call the yegu. When an invalid starts 763 to die he is taken to the place where he is to be buried and there, in 764 order to have him avoid the anguish of his last moments, he is choked to death. The body, not extended but half raised, is placed in a rather shallow hole which, after being covered with branches and grass, has earth thrown on it."

●768 "On returning from the funeral all the equipment which belonged to the deceased is broken up; his hut is dismantled and taken to a new spot [596] or at the very least the door through which he [764] passed on being carried out to his grave is covered over. Each village has its own common burial ground which is always close at hand."

765 "The deceased's relatives gather around the grave on the night following the burial, and perform the funeral rites with lugubrious clamorings and drumming on their pimpines. For some time they abstain from eating fish and other meats.

774 "They have a vague notion of the soul which they call Neuseh of which they believe that it outlives the body and transmigrates into

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

other tribes have larger flocks and more wives than the rest of their people. It is not a part of the Indian's nature to accumulate property for the future. This habit of living from hand to mouth is the chief reason of the poverty characteristic of the Chaco Indians. Only the women, who are in the first place responsible for the food supply in the house, may save food, at least for the next few days or weeks. The seeds necessary for the next sowing are also guarded by the women.

Among the Chaco Indians there is no law of inheritance, owing to the native custom of destroying a man's property, even his house, after his death.

Honesty is one of the native virtues of the Indians. Among the primitive *Choroti* and *Ashluslay*, who at the time when I travelled in the Chaco were quite unaffected by European civilisation, thefts and other gross crimes were entirely unknown, being prevented by the strong social feeling. Honesty is not only displayed towards fellow-tribesmen, but also towards a stranger and a white man, unless he has through his own conduct forfeited the respect which the primitive Indian, owing to his natural sense of right, would normally have for his property. As a significant proof of this I may mention the following experience which I once had among the Choroti. In April 1912, shortly before I intended to leave these Indians and return to Yacuiba, one of my mules ran away from me and was lost in the forest in the neighbourhood of a Choroti village, and in spite of prolonged searching could not be found. At last I was obliged to leave the village without my mule. At the end of the same year, about eight months later, I again visited these regions and the same Choroti village. My Indian friends at once informed me that some time after I had left, my mule had been caught by some other Choroti Indians and was now being kept in a other village, a few hours walk further off. An Indian was at once sent for the animal, and on the following day the mule was brought and given back to me. The Indians, supposing that I would return some time, had kept the animal, fed it well and taken care of it. It is needless to say that it would have been the easiest thing for them to hide it until I had again left, and to keep it for ever. They however considered it their duty to restore it to its right owner, who was a white friend of theirs. It is also needless to add that had the mule been found by someone of the whites living in these regions, I should never have seen it again.

The savage Indians are frequently accused by the whites of dishonesty. There is, I think, some exaggeration in this; but as a rule however,

M 556 M [351] M 428 768 C 577 M 177 577

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

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M C 764 M [535]

chant the whole night, beating drums and shaking rattles, while the women from time to time utter their peculiar dirge. Similarly among the Tobas drums and rattles are at work for several nights after the death takes place. Among the Mataco dancing forms part of the death-feast, the ceremonial dance *Katináh* being performed every night for a long time. The men taking part in this ceremony have their face blackened with charcoal as a »sign of sorrow», but in reality as a protection against the death-demon. As a rule the Indians would not admit that they feared the departed soul. On the contrary, the Mataco told me that when the medicine-man beats his drum in the evening, he at the same time says to the departed soul in an insinuating voice: »May you stay here, may you not leave us!» The Choroti again, in speaking of the deceased use the stereotyped phrase: *náhsah* (= *eie sáhe*), i. e. »he is good», although at the same time their whole behaviour clearly shows that they stand in fear of him.

M 764 273

The drinking of some intoxicating liquor also forms an important part of a death-feast, and it is considered necessary that the men taking part in the drinking-bout should get more or less intoxicated. The strong algaroba beer is most appreciated, but at those times of the year when there is no algaroba the Indians have to be content with beer brewed of tusca or chañar. Only in exceptional cases do the Chaco Indians drink maize beer at their feasts. The drinking of intoxicating liquors on these occasions has a ceremonial character and is believed to fill those taking part in it with power of resistance against the disease and death-demon.

M C 783 768

The way in which the Tobas purify the village after a death is typical of the Chaco Indians. Among all Pilcomayo tribes purification is chiefly carried out by means of fire brands which are waved about in all directions in the evening of the day on which the death takes place. Similarly, the destruction of the property of the deceased, the burning of his clothes and his other belongings, the destruction of the gourds from which he has eaten and drunk and, in general, of all things with which he has been in contact, are customary among the Choroti, the Mataco, and the Ashluslay. The taboo of death is attached to them and they can no longer be used. The whole house of course particularly falls under the death taboo and is therefore always burned. But the Mataco and the Choroti are generally not content with burning the hut where the deceased lived and where he died, but as a rule destroy the whole village, considering it polluted to such extent by the contagion of death that the

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba 512
Choroti SK6

relatives of the departed cannot live safely in it. This is the reason why in the Gran Chaco a traveller so often encounters remains of Indian villages which have evidently been burnt and abandoned by their inhabitants. The radical destruction of the whole village is always resorted to when several deaths have taken place at short intervals. The relatives of the deceased, when they abandon their own village, generally go and live with their relatives and friends in a neighbouring village, where they stay for some time, or until they decide to found a new settlement in some other part of the country. Custom requires that when the mourners arrive at the other village, they shall be received with wailing.

The Tobas, although they always burn the house where a death has taken place, do not as a rule deem it necessary to destroy the whole village. Similarly the relatives of the deceased generally remain there, building themselves a new dwelling; in other cases they leave the place for some time. The other inhabitants of the village, on the other hand, make no notable change in their mode of life, since they are not to the same extent exposed to danger from the death-spirit as the nearest relations.

Weeping and wailing plays an important part among the mourning ceremonies of the Indians, although it is always limited to the women and the children. The fact that wailing is ceremonial clearly appears from the circumstances under which it takes place. Although it is beyond doubt that the Indians are capable of real feelings of sorrow at the death of a near relation, yet their intense fear of death — including the fear of the dead body — is apparent throughout their mourning customs. The object of the wailing seems to be partly to propitiate the spirit of the departed relative by showing him how deeply the survivors grieve at his death, partly to frighten away the death-demon by the noise. The latter point of view is probably the most important. Wailing is continued for several months after the death. The length of the wailing period varies according to the social importance of the deceased. A great chief is mourned in all tribes for longer than an ordinary member of the community, in some cases up to a whole year. As to the manner of wailing there is a marked distinction between the Tobas and the Mataco on the one hand, and the Choroti on the other. The wailing of the Toba women is like a greatly exaggerated loud crying and sobbing which is seemingly the expression of a desperate sorrow. The wailing of the Choroti women is calmer and more like the weeping of a child. Every lamentation consists of a series of sounds produced in a high falsetto voice and

764 companying themselves on rattles and drums. These laments last for about one hour after death, then begin again when the corpse is carried away to be buried and finally when they come back from the burial. But on the following day only very near relatives parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles, go on weeping. Those who were already mourning for someone else weep louder than the others because they mourn for two.

765 The laments take place at sunrise and at sunset as well as in the middle of the afternoon. During the first days of mourning the near relatives of the deceased go to his home to mourn. There they run and dance, going continually [535] from one place to another and shaking their rattles with both hands. They accompany the dance with lamentations. With the exception of the wife of the deceased, women always mourn in this way, shaking rattles, dancing and lamentations. Mourning women must not appear bareheaded or with a naked face for they ought not to be seen. People [533] sing and play on rattles during the mourning period in order that the dead person may readily be forgotten. The laments which last two or three hours every day are supposed to help the living forget the dead. After six months, more or less, they weep only at dawn and even then very rarely. [302] The relatives of the dead person must cut off their hair in order not to displease the dead who would attack their heads and make them bald. The wife, at the death of her husband, observes mourning for two years. She shuts herself up in a special little hut often adjoining the hut of her married son, or daughter if she has no son.

● 768 The house of the deceased is pulled down and a new one built about 10 yards away. If this were not done the dead man would come back within fourteen days after death, attracted by memories of his previous life. The materials of the old house are used in the construction of the new one.

A widow may leave her home to satisfy her wants only at night. If she goes out during the day the dead man gets

3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

angry. No one is allowed to call on her and only very young boys may go into her house. She speaks only when it is necessary to get things she needs.

A medicine-woman of the village of Las Lomitas, whose husband died a year before, left her retreat in order to cure a sick child belonging to her family. After every treatment she went back to her hut. The child recovered in five days and she resumed her mourning. At no time did she speak with other members of her family.

In the morning and afternoon a widow plays a drum and weeps. Thus she tries to forget her husband but some time later she will think of him again and then go back to her drum. During this period she cuts her hair three times and eats her food with a fork and spoon.

If a woman looses her husband shortly after marriage, he may call on her frequently but if she marries another man before two years have elapsed the spirit of her late husband kills her new husband. After two years the dead man has forgotten his wife and marries a female spirit. When a widow dies her spirit goes to her husband and they live together as they did on earth. Upon the death of a husband the children are bound to support their mother unless she marries again after the two years of mourning.

XX. Miscellanea

a) *Dreams*

Dreams are of exceptional importance to the Matako who believe that everything which happens in dreams will come to pass in real life. The dream is the life of the soul which after death becomes a spirit. During sleep the soul is released to wander about in the world where it sees what will happen in material life. Ordinary men as well as medicine-men can identify images seen in dreams. Thus the Matako Indians expect to realize in life the accomplishment

6:Métraux E-5 (no date) 1943 SI7 Mataco SI7

terms. Every party ends with broken limbs, smashed skulls or at least ~~avail to persuade the mother to receive her child. The missionary~~ with black and blue marks. The fact that they gamble for high stakes on the outcome contributes to the violence of the party and to the passionate ardor of the players.

Aggressiveness finds another outlet in drinking bouts. Fights are so intimately associated with these alcoholic enjoyments that, before a party begins, the chief gives a long talk in which he exhorts the men to refrain from violence and to have a good time in peace and harmony. When the men begin to get inebriated the women conceal the weapons in the bush. Despite these precautions, quarrels and fights are rather common. Men remember slights and insults delivered months before and belatedly challenge the offender. Threats are exchanged and hard words are followed by acts of violence.

Formerly, of course, suppressed bad feelings found an outlet in the practice of black magic and aggressive personalities were able to indulge in regular warfare and scalping parties.

In order to maintain discipline and to prevent violence, missionaries have prohibited hockey, drinking and, of course, witchcraft and warfare. As a result there is in modern Matako society no institutionalized means for any person to give vent to his feelings of anger and aggression. Suicide is the only way open to punish the offender.

It is possible that interest in life itself decreases as the Indian is progressively prevented from carrying on any of his former activities. In addition, he is faced with increasingly difficult economic problems. The struggle for life is harsher and the conditions more humiliating. The Indians are well aware that they are the underdogs.

In a general way, we may say that the Matako have no resilience. They are abused, down trodden by the whites but rarely revolt. They accept their lot with abject resignation. Why should they bother, is their attitude; since the white man has come it has always been the same. Missionaries say that they rarely resist temptation; a man who for years has been a good Christian, "sins" at the first opportunity. Moreover, the Matako are decidedly unaquisitive; they give away for trifles the very objects for which they have worked for months in the sugar cane factories. They do not even bother to increase their small herds. Such indifference to possessions increases with old age. An old man asked, "Why should I bother to g[illegible]re goats, since I am about to die? This behavior undoubtedly carri[illegible] over from the past when the property of the dead was destroyed.

Nevertheless, since similar conditions prevail among other Indian groups without provoking a comparable predilection for suicide, the